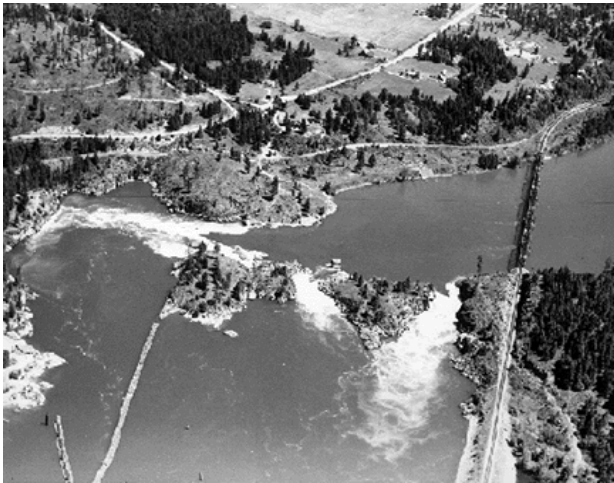

History

Pend Oreille River and Albeni Falls



Prior to construction of Albeni Falls Dam, the Pend Oreille River flowed through several channels between small islands and rock outcroppings (see picture to the left). The natural falls were known as Albeni Falls (and is the site of today's dam). The islands, however, impeded the spring runoff from melting mountain snows which would cause the lake to raise and flood property along the river and around Lake Pend Oreille. It wasn't until mid to late summer when the lake would naturally lower to its minimum level. Albeni Falls became Albeni Falls Dam in 1955. The region had experienced an increased need for water storage and power production to support the growing shipbuilding and aluminum industries downriver. To meet these growing needs, Congress authorized the dam in 1950 and construction began at the falls in 1951. By 1952 the dam was operational for flood control. With the increased channel capacity, spring flood levels were significantly reduced on the lake. Residents around Lake Pend Oreille now enjoy the benefits of the dam as it

... and become more enjoyable and beneficial to the dam. As it stabilizes the water level. Recreationists enjoy the use of the lake year-round.

Albeni Falls Dam Log Chute



A unique feature of the dam is the log chute. When the dam was constructed in the early 1950's, a 367.5-foot-long chute was included to handle the river traffic of logs. Driving four million feet of logs through a dam to the Diamond Match Company below was a new experience for the logging industry but proved to be a quick and inexpensive way to move the logs. Pilings were installed in the river to sort the logs once they reached the mill. The chute is believed to be the only contrivance of its kind in the world to facilitate passage of logs from upstream to downstream. One advantage of using the chute was that any substances picked up on the logs during falling and skidding were virtually washed loose. Debris, dirt and rocks could damage and wear down the teeth on the saws in the mills. Spruce bugs and worms were also washed loose which provided a feast for Kokanee salmon and seagulls. The chute was only used

about four years until hauling by logging trucks became more cost effective. It hasn't been used since. The old pilings are gone now. There's not much left today to remind us of the historic era of log drives except for the log chute that is still part of the dam. However, piling can still be seen near Cusick, Washington, and in the north Pend Oreille River.

Albeni Poirier, the man behind the name



In 1887, a 26 year-old French Canadian farmer living in Blanchard, Idaho heard stories about some falls along a river up north. Hoping to discover the falls for himself, Albeni Poirier set out on foot and with his pony. He located the falls and was so captivated by their beauty that he built a log cabin on the very site where he first saw the falls. Albeni's homestead was located directly across the river and downstream from where the visitor center is today. This aspiring young man built and operated a hotel and eating place used by hunters, fishermen and gold prospectors. He added a barn and a combined saloon, dance hall and blacksmith shop after the Great Northern Railroad completed its link to Troy, Montana, in 1892. Fishing and picnicking excursions to the falls became popular Sunday activities with travelers riding the train from Spokane, Washington. It is said that many people couldn't pronounce his last name, Poirier (Pwa-ree-AY), so his first name was used to name the falls -- Albeni Falls. Albeni Poirier's home and combined saloon, dance hall and blacksmith shop on the bank of the Pend Oreille River about 1894. Boats tied up in the cove and a ferry operated to and from this location. With the realignment of the Burlington Northern Railroad in 1908, Albeni Poirier's homestead was cut off from the river. The ferry

and boats no longer had an easy access to his establishment. The railroad bridges became the site where Albeni Falls Dam and spillway were constructed.

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